

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003042

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/22/2025

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#) [XL](#)

SUBJECT: FALLUJAH: CITY IMAMS ISSUE FATWA ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION; IECI FLIERS DISTRIBUTED

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD.
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: During a July 19 Fallujah city council session, Sheikh Kamal Shakir Mahmood -- a leading imam and council member -- announced that city clerics had issued a Fatwa (religious edict) calling upon all Fallujah residents to participate in the upcoming referendum and election. City imams had relayed the message through their mosques July 15. The Fatwa has only been issued orally. Fallujah City Council Vice-Chairman Qassim Mohamed Abdulsattar al-Jassam told Fallujah Poloff privately that approximately 100,000 IECI referendum and election fliers had been brought to Fallujah; some had already been distributed to residents. City leaders have stated they intend to keep national political issues on their local civic agenda. They want to work cooperatively with the Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces to ensure high voter turnout. END SUMMARY.

EDICT UNANIMOUS; IECI MATERIALS ON HAND

2. (C) In an aside to Fallujah Poloff July 19, Sheikh Kamal said that he expected "at least 50 percent of the city" to participate in the upcoming referendum. He was not overly worried about intimidation because a "majority" of Fallujans wanted to vote, adding "we will take even the aged to the polls." Another city leader, Engineer Fawzi (who initiated a separate grass-roots political gathering in early June) agreed. Sheikh Kamal said that the imams' decision to issue the edict had been unanimous. City religious leaders intended to help educate residents on political matters.

3. (C) Kamal said the edict had been initiated locally. There is also growing interest in participating in the political process in the provincial capital, Ramadi. In a July 17 PRDC meeting, Anbar Governor Mamoun passed two letters to Marine officers from the Provincial Council. One served as a call to action, urging non-complacency of Anbar Sunnis regarding national politics; the other contained a long list of complaints and concerns about security and reconstruction province-wide for which the Provincial Government seeks readdress in preparation for the referendum and elections. Both letters originated from a July 13th Provincial Council meeting that had focused on the referendum and subsequent election. As the Provincial Council has four members active in Fallujah, there may have been coordination between the cities regarding the substance of the fatwa and letters. Both seem to be driven by reports of a fatwa expected from "senior Sunni Scholars" which concluded a conference in Baghdad on this subject immediately prior to the July 13 PC Meeting. In a meeting with Division Assistant Division Commander July 20, Al Anbar Deputy Governor Talal stated that Adnan Al-Dulaimi, the head of the Sunni Endowment, had been announced the fatwa for all of Iraq; however, they had not seen a copy of the text of the message itself. END NOTE.

4. (C) PolOff urged continued city leaders to maintain their focus on the referendum and civic education initiatives, and reiterated that Iraq's political process was its own, not influenced by the U.S. or coalition. (Comment: Media reports about allegedly planned, eventually abandoned, covert U.S. intervention in the January 30 National Assembly election will inevitably be raised by Fallujah leaders and skeptical residents. Tribal leaders asked PolOff in prior meeting how Iraq's emerging democratic process can be safeguarded as fair and free. Such media reports in Western and Arab press will likely not be viewed as reassuring among Fallujah leaders regarding claimed U.S. neutrality in Iraqi politics. End Comment.)

5. (C) Fallujah Mayor Dhari told Poloff and a Marine civil affairs officer July 20, that the city council would keep the referendum and election on its weekly agenda, and that area tribal leaders were also prepared to inform local Sunnis about the constitution and election. Council vice chairman Qassim noted that locals had secured approximately 100,000 IECI fliers on referendum and election issues from Baghdad. These materials were in the city; some had been distributed. (Note: PolOff has requested a copy of the IECI materials, in addition to the fatwa, which locals

agreed to provide. End Note.)

JUNIOR IMAMS TALK POLITICS

16. (C) Two younger, lower-ranking imams confirmed that the fatwa had been issued in the city. One told PolOff in a brief meeting July 19, that he had been "very surprised" by the announcement, noting that he never thought his local mosque's imam would "utter these words." He believed 60-70 percent of the city would turn out for the referendum. The other said that the fatwa had been less of a surprise to him because most residents realized that not participating in the January 30 election had been a mistake -- city imams now understood this, too. He emphasized that since Iraqis "had only known war -- with Iran and now" many looked to the referendum and election for hope and improvement.

17. (C) COMMENT: We are not aware of a broad statement by the Sunni Endowment beyond its public statements supporting political participation broadly and in the constitution drafting more specifically. The announcement of the fatwa about the October elections in Fallujah marks an important step forward as Fallujah leaders begin to attempt to engage and educate citizens, largely on their own initiative, about the national political process. Fallujah still stands as Iraq's "city of mosques" despite its troubled past; a united stand by its religious leaders -- if sustained -- could help move a majority of residents (including those in outlying communities) to October polling sites. Insurgent intimidation in the city remains a concern, although it appears not to be an overriding one among residents at present. More Fallujans seem to understand that standing together as a majority will help beat back insurgent attempts to replace their current grass-roots political initiative with fear and related inaction. This toughened approach will undoubtedly be further tested in the run-up to referendum and election days. Current momentum is not guaranteed to last. It is clear that Fallujah leaders, however, both religious and political, have calculated for now that non-participation in January came at too high a price to be repeated. This is positive progress on the political process in Fallujah. It is worth remembering that Islamists are driving the process in Fallujah so far, and may well do so in Anbar more generally -- as they largely did in Shia regions. END COMMENT.

Satterfield